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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001463

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO AND AF/S; NSC FOR SR DIR JENDAYI FRAZER,
AID FOR AFR;

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [FAID](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION MAYORS OF HARARE AND CHITUNGWIZA FACE
GOZ OBSTACLES

Classified By: JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN FOR REASONS 1.5B/D

1.(C) Summary: The Ambassador met separately the week of June 10 with MDC Mayors of Harare and Chitungwiza. Their styles could not be more different. Harare Mayor Mudzuri served as chief city engineer and won a contentious and flashy campaign for the MDC mayoral nomination, while Chitungwiza Mayor Misheck Shoko is a soft-spoken former school headmaster with war-veteran credentials and a pragmatic bent. Both are hamstrung by Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo, who has substantial authority and motive to make their jobs difficult. While both are bedeviled by staffs chosen by ZANU-PF predecessors whom Chombo has intervened to protect, while Chitungwiza is additionally handicapped by a town council dominated by ZANU-PF (since only Harare had simultaneous Council elections).

Both mayors recognized, however, that no excuses will make up for failure to deliver for their residents. Harare, in particular, with a substantial revenue base and succeeding a corrupt and ineffective interim city management, has stepped out smartly to repair streets and public works. We will be looking at ways that we can help these new administrations get off to a good start. End Summary

12. (C) Harare Mayor Mudzuri beat out the Chairman of the Combined Harare Residents' Association (CHRA) David Samudzimi for the MDC mayoral nomination, reportedly by doing politics the "old-fashioned way" through free lunches and beers. Mudziri also got off on the wrong foot with some in CHRA and the MDC by taking possession of the mayoral Mercedes and moving into the guest house of a lavish mayoral mansion built by the previous regime. (Minister Chombo was only too happy to fuel this dispute by requiring that the Mayor occupy the mansion rather than sell it off.) Public criticism of the Mayor for "intolerable acquiescence to the Minister's dictates" by new CHRA Acting Director Mike Davies brought the disputes among the opposition into embarrassing public light.

Subsequently, the MDC and Mayor Mudzuri have worked hard to repair the damage and present a united front, both recognizing that Chombo will do nothing to help the Harare city administration and will take full profit from MDC disunity.

13. (C) During his meeting with the Ambassador, Mudzuri complained that Minister Chombo had reversed virtually all the terminations of eleventh-hour ZANU-PF appointments, including that of notorious war veteran leader Joseph Chinotimba as a city security officer. Chombo has directed that all personnel and financial decisions by the city be referred to him. Mudzuri noted that even the City Council's sacking of a high-ranking ZANU-PF official as the city's recently appointed public relations director awaited Chombo's approval. Mudzuri told the Ambassador that the law was unfortunately on Chombo's side and there was little point fighting in court. Instead, he would act in every area possible without asking permission. For example, the Mayor intended to carry out an audit of city accounts by Price-Waterhouse for 2.5 million Zimdollars (about 500 thousand US dollars at the official rate). Mudzuri said that he stated that he had good relations with citizens' groups and that he was also seeking to repair his relations with the CHRA, although there were still some difficulties. He also said that he was focusing on long-neglected public works and street repairs in these early months in order to show the citizenry that he was working in their interests. He expressed interest in training opportunities for city officials and councilors and in reviving a dormant relationship with Harare's sister city of Cincinnati.

4,(c) Chitungwiza Mayor Shoko has gotten off to a better start with civil society by meeting with them early on. His inherited city council, however, is dominated by ZANU-PF war veterans and have stormily opposed most of his initiatives, including the concept of consultation with residents. The Mayor told the Ambassador that the only gesture of conciliation offered by his Councilors was an offer to cut him in on a mutual distribution of commercial plots to be operated or sold by the Mayor and Councilors. His rejection of the offer and the scheme won him no friends in the Council. Shoko also complained that he has no employees of confidence in his administration, including his security. As

an ex war veteran himself, Shoko said that he was dealing with his political problems in a personal way without backing down. He is also hamstrung by Minister Chombo, who recently overruled Shoko's efforts to dismiss those city councilors who had violated rules against missing more than two consecutive council meetings. Shoko was also anxious to cooperate with us in addressing his high density suburb's myriad problems.

15. (c) Comment: These two mayors have assumed challenging tasks at a time when the country's economy is collapsing. They will get no favors and only obstruction from Minister Chombo. But as the MDC seeks to show it is more than an opposition party, how it does in these highly visible posts takes on added importance. We will work with these two newcomers to see how we might help them within the context of our pilot programs on local government.

SULLIVAN